THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHER-JEE): (a) and (b) As per information furnished by High Commission of India in Pakistan, Government of Pakistan has imposed a gerneral ban on export of sugar to all destinations including India.

(c) Import of sugar into India including those for the PDS are allowed freely without license with nil rates of duty from all permissible desitnations. STC and MMTC have also been directed to import sugar for augmenting PDS supplies.

Proposal for one time registration of tobacoo farmers by tobacoo board.

7367. SHRI V.HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal before the Tobacco Board to give one time registration to all tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh who are not registered with the Tobacco Board;

(b) whether it is also a fact that many tobacco farmers have sought registration with the Board; and

(c) whether the Board has initiated any steps to protect tobacco farmers and their economic interests?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHER-JEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The following steps have been taken:—

(1) The Tobacco Board plans the crop size taking into account the domestic and international demand and supply position.

(2) The Tobacco Board conducts auction' sales of FCV tobacco on a transparent basis which ensures prompt and fair payment.

(3) Every year, Government declares minimum support prices for FCV tobacco.

Shrimp seed facility operated by MPEDA

7368. SHRIV.HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMME RCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MPEDA is operating a Shrimp seed facility near Visakhapatnam;

(b) if so, the details thereof:

(c) whether it is also a fact that the shrimp seed farm near Visakhapat-nam is not running efficiently; and

(d) steps proposed to improve the efficiency of MPEDA ship seed farm near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHER-JEE): (a) to (d) The Andhra Pradesh Shrimp seed production supply and Research Centre (TASPARC) is functioning through a society registered under MPEDA. The society became operational in 1989 with an initial capacity of 40 million seeds. Subsequently in December 1991-92 its capacity was doubled to 80 million seeds. As against this, the production sales in 1993-94 were 118 million seeds, which is well over the rate capacity.

Liberalisation of diesel subsidy scheme of MPEDA

7369. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMME RCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have been considering liberalisation of the

diesel subsidy scheme of MPEDA in the coming fishing season; and

(b) steps being taken to assist trawler owners in Andhra Pradesh under this scheme?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHER-JEE): (a) Government has recently modified the HSD price reimbursement scheme by extending it to supplies taken by eligible vessels through ~id-sea bunkering from sources abroad.

(b) The benefits under the scheme is available to all eligible deep sea fishing vessels including those operated by trawler owners from Andhra Pradesh.

Purchase of Tobacco from Andhra Pradesh by erstwhile count-tries of soviet Union

7370. SHRI V. RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the erstwhile countries of Soviet Union have shown any interest in the purchase of Andhra to-bacco from the 1994 tobacco crop;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(*c*\ Expected quantities to be purchased by erstwhile Soviet Union this year?

THE MINISTER OF COMME-RCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHER-IEE): (a) to (c) The Indian Government has been pursuing with the Russian Government to import assu-red quantities of tobacco under the debt repayment route. However, i is 2Spossible to anticipate the expected n£S£ to be purchased by the CIS entries this year because, as gathered from the trade, no firm indi-cations have been received by the exporters in this regard.

Effect of restrictive legislation on tobacco economy

7371, SHRI V. HANUMAN-THA RAO : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Tobacco Board held a Board Meeting in May 1994 to consider the adverse effects of restrictive legislation on tobacco economy ;

(b) the details of the decision of the Tobacco Board in this regard ; and

(c) steps being taken to protect the tobacco economy of Andhra Pradesh ?.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUK-HERJEE) : (a) and (b) The subject was discussed in an informal meeting which representatives of manufac-turers, exporters, farmers, some Board members and Director, Tobacco Institute of India attended.

The meeting resolved to recommend to Govt, the following :—

(1) To refer the proposed legislation to an expert committee for a thorough examination of its provision and related aspects.

(2) The whole gamut of issues should be discussed with the Tobacco industry, growers, trade, research scientists, Govt, bodies involved with Tobacco concerned State Govts., Advertising and Market Research agencies etc.

(3) To keep the proposed legislation in abeyance till the completion of the process of consultation with various in-terest groups and submission of recommendation of the .ro-posed Committee.